

## Message Text

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ORIGIN EA-09

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DRAFTED BY EA/TB RASMITH  
APPROVED BY EA:RAOAKLEY  
S/S- MR. SEBASTIAN

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TO USDEL SECRETARY PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 067752 TOSEC 030009

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:PINS, TH,

SUBJECT: COUP ATTEMPT IN THAILAND FAILS

1. AT DAWN ON THE MORNING OF MARCH 26 GENERAL CHALAT AND APPROXIMATELY 300 TROOPS FROM A DIVISION STATIONED OUTSIDE BANGKOK ATTEMPTED TO SEIZE CONTROL OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THAILAND. THE ATTEMPT FAILED WHEN THE FIRST DIVISION, GARRISONED IN BANGKOK, DID NOT SUPPORT THE REBELS. CHALAT'S FORCES DID, HOWEVER, KILL THE FIRST DIVISION COMMANDER, AND TOOK BRIEF CONTROL OF RADIO THAILAND AND A NEARBY ARMY COMMAND CENTER ALONG WITH A SCORE OF HOSTAGES. AFTER AN INITIAL PERIOD OF UNCERTAINTY, THE THAI GOVERNMENT ASSERTED ITS AUTHORITY, CUTTING OFF ELECTRICITY TO THE RADIO STATION AND SURROUNDING THE COMMAND CENTER. BY EVENING, ALL REBEL TROOPS HAD LAID DOWN THEIR ARMS. CHALAT AND FOUR OTHERS FOR THE RELEASE OF THE HOSTAGES. IT APPEARS LIKELY CHALAT AND HIS COLLEAGUES WILL GO INITIALLY TO TAIWAN. THERE WERE NO INJURIES TO AMERICAN CITIZENS OR THEIR PROPERTY AND THE INCIDENT WAS CONFINED TO ONE SMALL SECTION OF  
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BANGKOK.

2. GENERAL CHALAT IS AN AGGRESSIVE AND AMBITIOUS OFFICER WHO HAS A LONG HISTORY OF INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICAL INTRIGUE. IN 1976 HE SCHEMED WITH OUTGOING MINISTER OF DEFENSE PSAMAN TO BE APPOINTED HEIR APPARENT TO ARMY COMMANDER IN CHIEF IN RETURN FOR SUPPORTING

PRAMAN'S PRIME MINISTERIAL AMBITIONS. FOLLOWING THE OCTOBER 6 COUP D'ETAT CHALAT WAS SUSPENDED FROM ACTIVE DUTY BY THAILAND'S MILITARY LEADERS FOR ALLEGED COUP PLOTTING NOT IN CONCERT WITH THEIR OWN. SINCE THEN CHALAT HELD NO OFFICIAL POSITION IN THE ARMY AND PRESUMABLY PURCHASED THE SERVICES OF HIS 300 SUPPORTERS IN THE MARCH 26 COUP ATTEMPT.

3. COMMENT: IN CONTRAST TO THE CLIQUES OF ARMY OFFICERS WHO HAVE FOR MOST OF THE LAST 45 YEARS CONTROLLED THE THAI GOVERNMENT, THAILAND'S CURRENT MILITARY OVERSEERS CONSIST OF THE GENERAL STAFF OF ALL THREE BRANCHES OF THE ARMED FORCES. THESE SENIOR OFFICERS REPRESENT POTENTIALLY COMPETING FACTIONS WITHIN THE THAI MILITARY. OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS THAT THEY HAVE BEEN IN POWER, THERE HAVE BEEN PERIODIC REPORTS OF COUP PLOTTING BY DISSATISFIED SENIOR MEMBERS WITHIN THE GROUP. THE FAILURE OF THE MARCH 26 COUP ATTEMPT GIVES EVIDENCE THAT THE THAI GENERAL STAFF IS MAINTAINING ITS UNITY AND THAT THE CHAIN OF COMMAND CONTINUES TO BE VIABLE. MAINTENANCE OF THAT COHESION AMONG THESE SENIOR OFFICERS IS ESSENTIAL TO THE CONTINUATION OF THE PRESENT CIVILIAN CABINET OF PRIME MINISTER THANIN WHICH THE GENERAL STAFF APPOINTED LAST OCTOBER 6.  
CHRISTOPHER

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**TAGS:** PINS, TH, (CHALAT)  
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